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ABSTRACT

A system was developed in the Open Learning Centres to make resources and instructional materials available to adult basic education (ABE) students. The materials were organized so that information could be provided to students to help them make choices among the items. Initially, a color coding system was devised, but it was found that it was not useful. The project sought a system that would enable students to find quickly exactly what was wanted, be easy to understand, offer a realistic choice of resources, give an indication of levels, indicate probable outcomes, be linked to accreditation levels, be capable of being added to or amended by anyone, invite comments from users, and suggest rather than stipulate. As a result, study guides were developed for mathematics and spelling. The guides are displayed on a revolving stand holding instructional materials that suggest items to use. The guides have made it easier for students to be involved in the choice of appropriate resources, and the student can survey all that is available before starting to work. (KC)

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# Organising Resources in OPEN LEARNING

**It is not easy to organise materials so that students can pick the section of a book, tape, worksheet or computer programme which suits them, knowing its level and purpose. Alison Thompson, Co-ordinator, Open Learning Centre, Newcastle, describes the system they have set up.**

## *Open and different*

For many people the term Open Learning conjures up images of learning packs which enable access to training without the need for attendance at a fixed time or place and where tuition is delivered entirely through the pack, with or without tutorial support by post or phone, or face to face.

There is, however, a sense in which the Open Learning Pack is in fact the most closed method of learning – the pack itself defines what should be learnt, the time it should take and the methodology employed. Little allowance is made for prior learning, preferred modes of learning, or individual difficulties. Failure to achieve the stated aims of the pack inevitably implies inadequacy on the part of the student; there is also the assumption that unless every part of the pack is completed, thorough learning has not taken place, regardless of whether the individual student actually needed to cover all the ground.

Most ABE tutors would reject the notion of students fitting themselves to available resources, and insist that the resources should be capable of being adapted to fit student needs. For this reason, amongst others, within the context of ABE, the term Open Learning has developed in a substantially different way. Here the emphasis has been on flexibility, variety, 'openness' in the sense of provision geared to meet the wide range of needs presented by a wide variety of students, and the implications of this for the development and organisation of resources have been of crucial significance for those of us involved in working in the Open Learning Centres.

The 'openness' of the new Centres has meant that any student wishing to work on any aspect of English or Maths up to GCSE level has been able to benefit from provision offered, on an entirely individual basis, working at a pace and level which suits that student, on topics relevant to particular needs.

In our experience it is rare for any two students to follow identical work plans – individual preferences concerning modes of learning, pace of learning, topics covered, etc., mean that there are a many different ways of achieving similar goals as there are students.

For example, there may be, say, half a dozen students at any given time in the year working on fractions, for a variety of reasons and therefore with a variety of goals beyond that of simply wanting to understand fractions. The individual goal, as well as the level of knowledge already possessed, determines the way in which this might be approached, as do factors such as time available, possible examination or test requirements, the student's own learning patterns and, importantly, the student's feelings about the topic. Thus there will be six different work plans, using resources in six different ways, and an analysis will show that whilst there may be resources common to all, it is the particular combination of resources which promotes effective individual learning.

It is evident then, that to offer truly flexible provision geared to individual needs we must ensure as much variety in our resources as possible.

Fortunately, generous funding of the Open Learning Centres meant that we were able to acquire just such a rich variety, including not only traditional paper-based learning materials, supplemented by resources produced by the Project Team, together with a varied collection of 'Everyday Materials'.

So . . . we had an impressively wide range of resources which are being added to all the time.

It was always evident that simply having them was not enough – we had to make them accessible to both tutors and students so that the encouragement of independent learning (one of the major aims of the Open Learning Centres) would be possible. In other words, we had to provide enough information about the resources for students to make realistic choices about the kinds of resources that would meet their needs, would suit their approach to learning and would reflect the level they wanted to work at.

## Setting up a system

Initially we used colour coding, but found it was not enough to know that such and such a book contained a chapter on letter-writing, or that a computer programme would help with spelling – we need much more information in terms of levels, possible routes through resources, different methods of approach.

We needed a system which would enable initially tutors and students, then students alone, to make rational, informed decisions about which resources they wanted to use.

We decided that what we needed was a system which would:

- enable everybody to find quickly exactly what they wanted
- be easy to understand
- offer a realistic choice of resources

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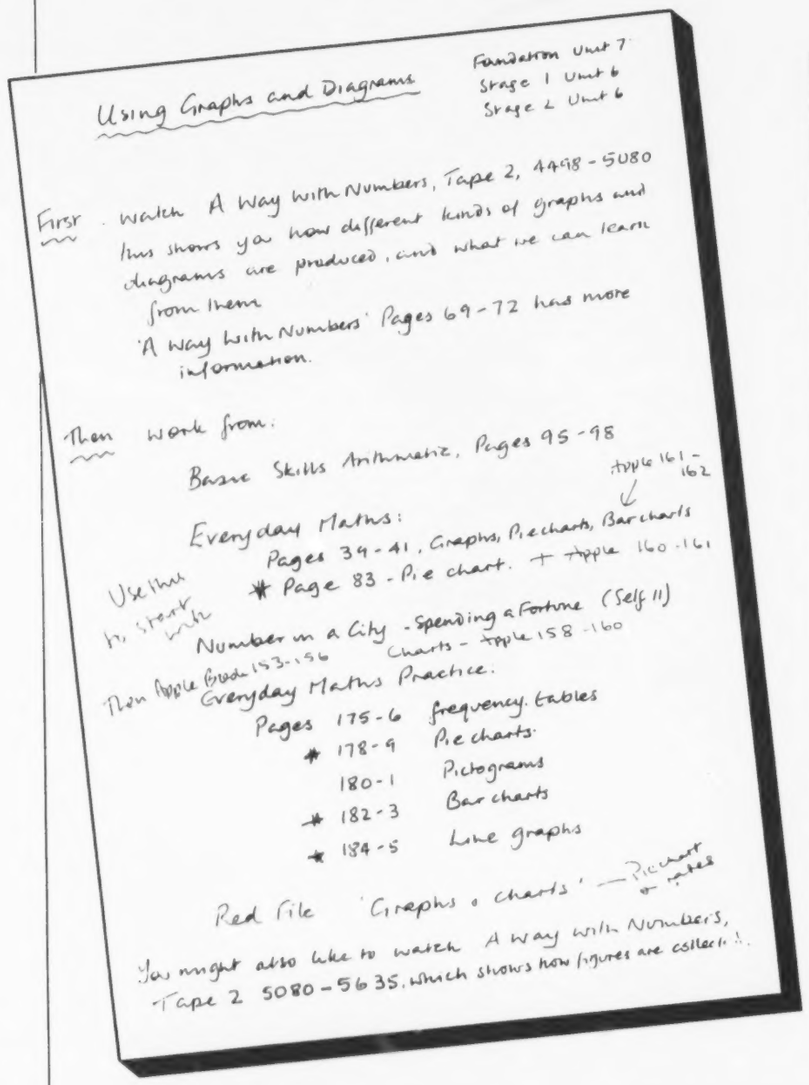


Using Graphs and Diagrams

Foundation Unit 7
Stage 1 Unit 6
Stage 2 Unit 6

First - Watch A Way with Numbers, Tape 2, 4498 - 5080
This shows you how different kinds of graphs and diagrams are produced, and what we can learn from them.
'A Way with Numbers' Pages 69 - 72 has more information.

Then work from:

Basic Skills Arithmetic, Pages 95 - 98

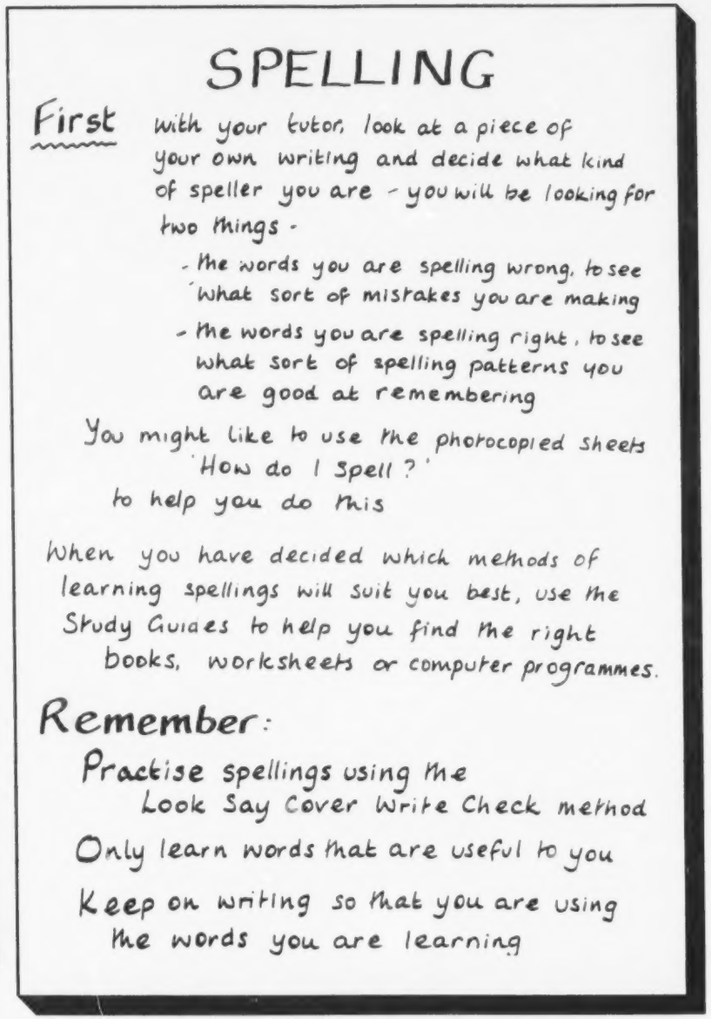
Everyday Maths:
Pages 34 - 41, Graphs, Pie charts, Bar charts
* Page 83 - Pie chart. + Topple 160 - 161
Use this to start with
Number in a City - Spending a Fortune (Self 11)
Then Topple Book 153 - 156
Everyday Maths Practice.
Charts - topple 158 - 160

Pages 175 - 6 frequency tables
* 178 - 9 Pie charts
180 - 1 Pictograms
* 182 - 3 Bar charts
* 184 - 5 Line graphs

Topple 161 - 162

Red File 'Graphs & charts' — Pictograms or tables

You might also like to watch A Way with Numbers, Tape 2 5080 - 5635, which shows how figures are collected.



# SPELLING

First with your tutor, look at a piece of your own writing and decide what kind of speller you are - you will be looking for two things -

- the words you are spelling wrong, to see what sort of mistakes you are making
- the words you are spelling right, to see what sort of spelling patterns you are good at remembering

You might like to use the photocopied sheets 'How do I spell?' to help you do this

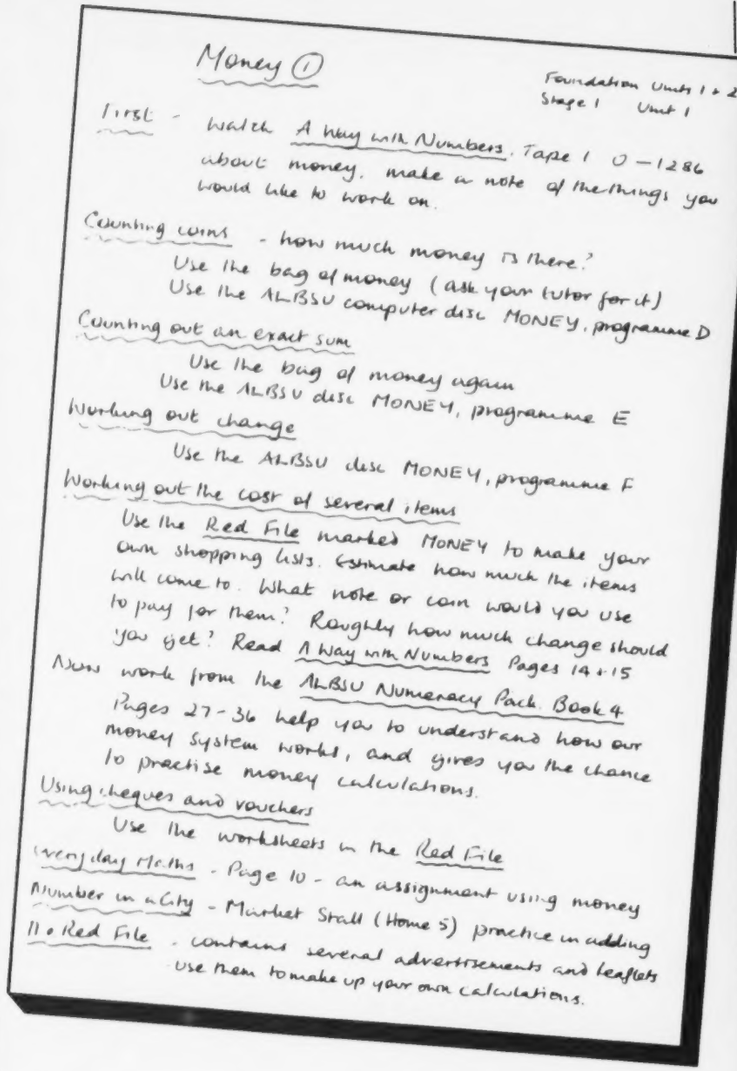
When you have decided which methods of learning spellings will suit you best, use the Study Guides to help you find the right books, worksheets or computer programmes.

**Remember:**

Practise spellings using the Look Say Cover Write Check method

Only learn words that are useful to you

Keep on writing so that you are using the words you are learning



Money (1)

Foundation Units 1 + 2
Stage 1 Unit 1

First - Watch A Way with Numbers, Tape 1 0 - 1286 about money. Make a note of the things you would like to work on.

Counting coins - how much money is there?
Use the bag of money (ask your tutor for it)
Use the ALBSU computer disc MONEY, programme D

Counting out an exact sum
Use the bag of money again
Use the ALBSU disc MONEY, programme E

Working out change
Use the ALBSU disc MONEY, programme F

Working out the cost of several items
Use the Red File marked MONEY to make your own shopping lists. Estimate how much the items will come to. What note or coin would you use to pay for them? Roughly how much change should you get? Read A Way with Numbers Pages 14 - 15

Now work from the ALBSU Numeracy Pack Book 4
Pages 27 - 36 help you to understand how our money system works, and gives you the chance to practise money calculations.

Using cheques and vouchers
Use the worksheets in the Red File

Everyday Maths - Page 10 - an assignment using money
Number in a City - Market Stall (Home 5) practice in adding
11 + Red File - contains several advertisements and leaflets - use them to make up your own calculations.

- co-ordinate all the different kinds of resources, making a multi-media approach possible where appropriate
- be capable of answering questions like 'Where do I start?' 'Where do I go from here?' 'I need more on this, what else might help?'
- give an indication of levels of operation
- indicate probable outcomes
- be linked to accreditation levels
- be capable of being added to or amended by everybody
- invite comments from users
- suggest rather than stipulate.

## Study Guides

Once we had defined our needs, the development of the Study Guides seemed an obvious and logical solution.

We started with Numeracy materials, since this seemed to be the major area where we were using a very limited selection of the resources available, and were aware that potentially valuable materials were either not being used, or were being used haphazardly, thus depleting their effectiveness. There was confusion about coherent routes through the wealth of materials available, resulting in many of us sticking to a few tried and tested books or packs, with the occasional foray into the SMILE programmes.

The operation itself involved the thorough analysis and cataloguing of all the Numeracy materials we possessed. Using broad topics, lists were made of everything we had on particular areas of Numeracy; we then ordered these to produce guides which indicated possible starting points, particular emphases, likely outcomes and suggestions for further work. We were able to co-ordinate books, study packs, videos and computer programmes and link the topics to elements of Numberpower.

The Guides are displayed on a revolving stand holding A4 sheets in plastic wallets. Students and tutors are able to remove them, use them and photocopy them so the student has a personal checklist – which in most cases indicates the individual choices made from the suggestions on the sheet.

Although people have queried the use of handwriting as opposed to word-processing, having given this some thought, we decided to retain the present appearance and layout of the Guides in the hope that this would encourage 'ownership' by all – i.e. students and tutors would feel more ready to add their own comments and suggestions if these could be quickly written in and still be in keeping with the style of the sheet.

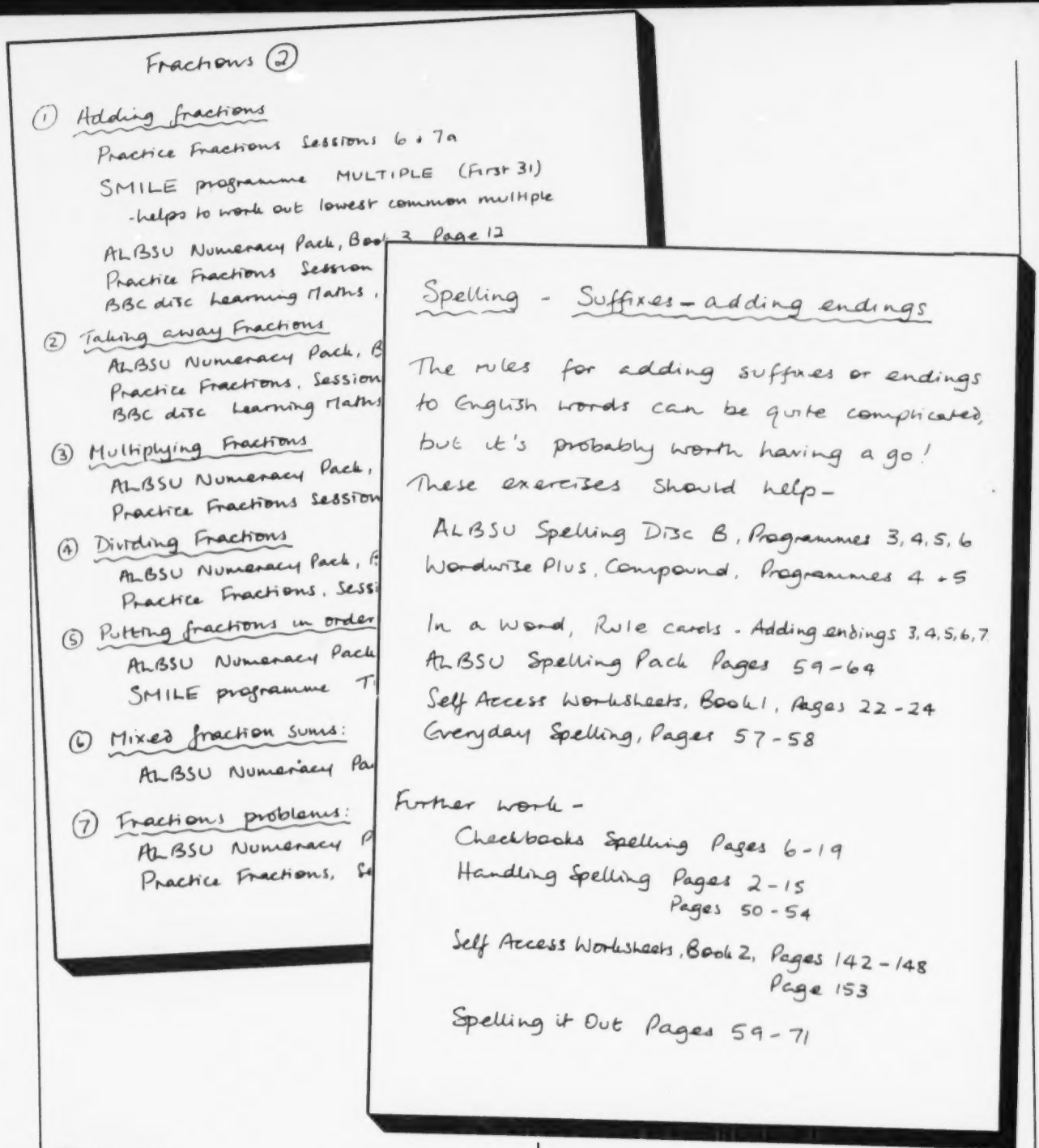
We next turned our attention to Spelling – again an area with a wealth of resources of varying approaches and levels of difficulty.

An effective approach to solving spelling problems depends crucially on what the individual student brings to the situation.

As Cynthia Klein points out in 'Specific Learning Difficulties' (ALBSU Newsletter, Winter 1989) it is important to determine the student's strengths and weaknesses in terms of sensory acuity, perception and memory and to analyse the *kind* of mistakes being made, to decide on the method of learning likely to be most appropriate.

Therefore we approached the production of the Spelling Guides slightly differently, being concerned to offer the individual student a choice of approaches consistent with particular needs. The Guides thus reflect the variety of possible ways of tackling spelling – looking at spelling patterns, adding endings, using sounds, etc., hence the importance of the general introduction to the Guides, which stresses the need to analyse present strengths and weaknesses before adopting a particular approach.

Although the work involved in putting the Guides together was extensive, we do now feel it was well worth the effort. There is an overall sense of having 'organised' the resources – we know now where everything is, which has avoided a lot of frustration searching through books and packs to find the appropriate section, wasting valuable time in the process. The resources have been 'opened up' and, more importantly, the Guides have meant that the use of multiple resources by the students is coherent and planned rather than based on the haphazard discovery of something else on the topic in question, which might in fact have been more useful if it had been looked at first.



Fractions ②

① Adding fractions
Practice Fractions Sessions 6 & 7a
SMILE programme MULTIPLE (First 31)
-helps to work out lowest common multiple
ALBSU Numeracy Pack, Book 3 Page 12
Practice Fractions Session
BBC disc Learning Maths,

② Taking away Fractions
ALBSU Numeracy Pack, B
Practice Fractions, Session
BBC disc Learning Maths

③ Multiplying Fractions
ALBSU Numeracy Pack,
Practice Fractions Session

④ Dividing Fractions
ALBSU Numeracy Pack, F
Practice Fractions, Sess

⑤ Putting fractions in order
ALBSU Numeracy Pack
SMILE programme T

⑥ Mixed fraction sums:
ALBSU Numeriacy Pa

⑦ Fractions problems:
ALBSU Numeracy P
Practice Fractions, S

Spelling - Suffixes - adding endings

The rules for adding suffixes or endings to English words can be quite complicated, but it's probably worth having a go! These exercises should help -

ALBSU Spelling Disc B, Programmes 3, 4, 5, 6
Wordwise Plus, Compound, Programmes 4 & 5

In a Word, Rule cards - Adding endings 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
ALBSU Spelling Pack Pages 59-64
Self Access Worksheets, Book 1, Pages 22-24
Everyday Spelling, Pages 57-58

Further work -
Checkbooks Spelling Pages 6-19
Handling Spelling Pages 2-15
Pages 50-54
Self Access Worksheets, Book 2, Pages 142-148
Page 153
Spelling it Out Pages 59-71

## Outcomes

The Guides have also made it a lot easier and more practicable for students themselves to be involved in the choice of appropriate resources. Access to relevant resources is straightforward and the student can survey all that is available before starting work. In this way the student makes decisions about the level of work that he or she feels comfortable with, also decisions about how much or how little work needs to be done on a particular topic to meet individual goals; if further work is needed, it is easy to find follow up material.

The Guides have thus contributed significantly to the development of independence, in that they have encouraged a 'mix and match' approach to the use of resources based on individual needs and preferences rather than relying on tutors to suggest appropriate resources.

Although initially the tutor is involved in advising as to choice, gradually this input diminishes as students become more familiar with both the system and the resources themselves, and get to know which approach suits them best.

The Guides, therefore, have achieved two major aims. They have made the resources accessible in that specific sections of books or packs, specific elements of computer programs and particular tracks on videos are easily available for use; they have also, in encouraging individual routes through resources, geared to individually defined goals and work plans, emphasised the whole idea of independent learning by enabling the student to make choices, and take increasingly more responsibility for the planning of work.

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